

March 7, 2022

Testimony of Alan Blasenstein

Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails.

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee:

I am writing to register my strong support for HB 5291. There are so many reasons to increase funding for greenways and recreational trails. These corridors provide a safe area for an incredibly diverse group of users - diverse by income, age, physical ability, and activity. As trails such as the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail have been built and extended, we have seen their popularity grow with cyclists, walkers, runners, skaters, dog walkers. The onset of Covid-19 and subsequent "lock-downs" increased trail use tremendously, as home-bound individuals and families sought healthy, outdoor exercise.

What are the other benefits of Connecticut's greenways? They can provide economic benefit to adjacent businesses, and even boost overnight tourism. Studies have shown that they can improve property values nearby. They are an amenity that will attract young families to live in Connecticut. And there are environmental benefits to maintaining open space corridors, particularly along rivers and streams.

Right now, we have many more worthwhile projects, large and small, than we are able to fund. We need to fill gaps in existing greenways, and create safe conduits for active transportation in our towns. The increased bond funding in HB 5291 is a good start in the right direction. Trails do cost money, but they are a bargain, and I believe they are worth far more than they cost.

Sincerely,

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